

## **The U.S. Government is Pleased That Bikinians Can Now Return to their Native Island of Bikini**

U.S. Public Law 99-239 "The Compact of Free Association" created a Trust Fund to make it financially feasible for the Bikini people to return to their homeland of Bikini Island which was contaminated by fallout from the U.S. atmospheric nuclear weapons tests. Although it has been economically possible, there has been a lingering concern that residual levels of contamination may still be sufficient to preclude such resettlement on Bikini Island.

Over the past 10 years, there have been five different studies conducted to establish national and international focus on the issue of whether these residual levels pose a problem or not to the Marshallese who wish to return to those atolls most contaminated by the nuclear fallout. For example, in 1994, the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) found that, with appropriate mitigative measures, the people of Rongelap Atoll could return to their atoll and live there safely.

The most relevant study to of the Bikini Island situation to date, was just completed by an Advisory Group of international experts conducted under the auspices of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in Vienna, Austria. The Advisory Group was convened by the IAEA in response to a request for technical assistance from the government of the Republic of the Marshall Islands. The findings of the IAEA Advisory Group are presented in a draft final report, still yet to be published, entitled "Radiological Conditions at Bikini Atoll, Prospects for Resettlement." That report is still pending approval of the government of the Republic of the Marshall Islands and will be published as soon as that approval is obtained.

Although, their findings are still in draft, they have reported to the people of Bikini, and have once and for all, assured them that they can live on Bikini without fear of health impact from residual radionuclides still present to a small degree in the soils and food crops on the islands, if certain mitigative measures are taken.

Although the IAEA Advisory Group did not make definite recommendations to the Bikini community on which strategy to follow, it considered that the strategy of using potassium fertilizer to be the preferred approach. The use of potassium fertilizer in areas where food crops are grown reduces the uptake of residual cesium-137 in locally grown food crops by as much as 95%. The results expected from using this strategy are consistent with international guidance on interventions to avert dose in chronic exposure situations. Therefore, it is expected that using this strategy would provide a radiologically safe environment permitting early resettlement.

The recommendations also assume some limited program of monitoring of radiation levels, with participation by members of the community. The report pointed out that the present Marshallese diet contains, and would in the near future presumably continue to contain, a significant portion of imported foods. The report presumes that Bikinians, upon their return to their atoll, will still consume a diet which has a substantial portion of imported foods which is assumed to be free of residual radionuclides.

The Bikinians have long sought information on when it will be safe to return to Bikini. The United States chartered, and the U.S. Department of Energy funded, the NAS Committee which provided the technical evaluation of such radiological issues in the Marshall Islands. That body recommended the same course of action as the International Atomic Energy Agency has recently recommended.

With the completion of the report by the IAEA Advisory Group and the NAS study on Rongelap, the people of Bikini are now free to make decisions based on these recommendations and, if they so choose, begin preparations (using trust funds already established) to resettle in their homeland.

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Subject: BNL Contract

----- Message Contents -----

After conferring with the BNL Contract Officer (Robert Gordon 516-344-3346) at DOE BNL AREA OFFICE, BNL is prohibited by contract to compete with the private sector, therefore they cannot respond to a RWP....Gordon indicated 2 things:

- 1) BNL can only respond to a "Broad Agency Announcement"
- 2) BNL can be a subcontractor to a private sector company, therefore they apparently could respond to a bid from Bechtel Nevada calling for medical care & delivery proposals

Tim, could you please contact Gordon to determine if this is true & what actually constitutes a "Broad Agency Announcement???"